

As in the case of many other languages, the intonation fulfils certain linguistic functions in Czech. It distinguishes conclusive vs. non-conclusive clauses, declarative vs. interrogative clauses and neutral vs. marked usage clauses. In the case of declarative and interrogative clauses, the intonation is the single distinguishing feature.

Structures of the basic patterns to express these linguistic functions were standardized and in general accepted, but not enough is known about their particular realizations. In general, these structure types are realized in the final stress unit of the utterance.

It has been confirmed that the intonation courses of some functionally diverse contours are similar and there exist overlaps among them. The perceptual differences between contours can be caused only by the size of F0 excursions.

Our research focuses on finding minimal distinctions in F0 excursions which are sufficient to distinguish phonologically different types of sentences. Some structure types can be fully realized on the at least three-syllable stress units, that is why these were chosen to be analysed.

The research is based both on synthetic speech and natural one. Two sets of synthetic contours, first containing three-syllable stress units and the second the four-syllable ones, that cover the structure types used for yes-no questions and non-conclusive clauses and partly for statements were created. Special attention was paid to the transition range.

These contours were tested to verify their functional validity for native Czech speakers; the tests were administered in different regional parts of the Czech Republic, both in Bohemia and in Moravia. To verify some tendencies indicated in the evaluation of the synthetic contours two sets based on natural speech were analysed. Firstly we focused on the detailed description of the two variants of contour type used for yes/no question, which are used differently according to the geographic region.